



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC RECOGNIZES TEN YEARS OF NATIONWIDE PROVISION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICES AND CERTIFIES AS COMPLIANT THE STATE TRS PROGRAMS OF ALL 50 STATES

Washington, D.C. -- Today the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recognizes ten years of nationwide provision of Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). TRS enables individuals with hearing or speech disabilities to utilize the telephone system and communicate with persons without such disabilities.

The Commission also announces that the state TRS programs for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have been certified as compliant with FCC rules. This certification is for a five year period, beginning July 26, 2003, and ending July 25, 2008.

Chairman Michael K. Powell stated, "We are proud of the decade of expanded opportunities and enhanced communications that TRS has fostered. Creating such opportunities for Americans with disabilities is central to the Commission's agenda. We are committed to greater flexibility, more aggressive outreach and fostering innovation in the provision of these services. I look forward to the continued growth of TRS as well as policies that expand access to the digital revolution for all Americans."

The FCC developed regulations, pursuant to Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), for the provision of intrastate and interstate relay, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. On July 26, 1993, the United States became the first nation in the world to guarantee around-the-clock telecommunications access for the millions of Americans who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability. Prior to the ADA, some states had voluntarily implemented a relay service, often staffed by volunteers, with limited hours, and varying levels of quality. The Commission's first regulations guaranteed reliable quality relay for all Americans and were viewed as ground-breaking by the international disability community.

In the ten years of nationwide relay, the Commission has made significant advancements in these regulations and the United States continues to be the international leader in the provision of access to telecommunications by persons with disabilities. On May 15, 2003, the Commission adopted a Report and Order that requires Caller ID, 3-Way Calling, Speed Dialing, Call Release, and improved variations of Voice Carry-Over and Hearing Carry-Over. In addition, the FCC requires the provision of interstate Spanish relay, Speech-to-Speech relay, and 711 access to relay. Further, millions of Americans are now able to use the Internet as part of their relay calls.

Information regarding TRS, state certification applications and TRS complaint log summaries are available on the FCC's Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trs.html.

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